



# County of San Diego

## Department of Environmental Health

### Land and Water Quality Division

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## Ordinance Lifting the Citrus Avenue Moratorium

On September 6, 2003 the County Board of Supervisors adopted an ordinance repealing San Diego County Code, Sections 51.004, 68.330.3, and 81.108.12, and amending Section 68.309, all relating to the Citrus Avenue Septic System Moratorium

The basis of lifting the moratorium was that the Department of Environmental Health has a strict groundwater separation policy in place for the design and construction of septic systems. This will be used to evaluate each parcel for the feasibility of designing a septic system that meets all current design criteria.

Key Points are:

- California Regional Water Quality Control Board will co-review all projects DEH reviews for sites within the moratorium area.
- The existing DEH Percolation Test Policy is very specific on methodology for obtaining verifiable soil permeability data for septic system designs.
- The existing DEH Groundwater Policy was expanded 2 years ago to clarify that the absence of groundwater within an observation boring alone does not address whether or not historic groundwater levels have been observed. Historic groundwater levels are defined as the shallowest point to the ground surface groundwater will rise as a result of full recharge of a groundwater basin from rainfall, in addition to recharge from development.
- In the Citrus Ave Moratorium Area, not only is DEH looking for groundwater levels associated with basin recharge, but also the cumulative effect of groundwater recharge from rainfall and mounding effects from development of vacant parcels that could still impact existing homes with a history of septic system failures caused by high groundwater.
- Some sites will require full hydro geologic studies in addition to groundwater monitoring to show what impacts to adjacent properties will have from proposed development.

- So far, there has been insufficient rainfall over the past several years to provide normal groundwater recharge to the S. Citrus Avenue watershed basin. Continued groundwater monitoring on many parcels is expected until the basin shows full groundwater recharge.
- Mound systems will be considered on existing parcels within the former moratorium boundaries. DEH has design criteria for mound systems approved by the California Regional Water Quality Control Board. These systems will require annual operating permits for required maintenance of this type of sewage disposal system.
- The minimum separation between the bottom of a septic system and historic groundwater levels remains 5 feet.
- Undeveloped parcels that do not meet the groundwater separation criteria will still be considered unbuildable without connection to public sewer.
- Developed parcels that do not meet the groundwater separation criteria will not be approved for additions that increase the potential occupancy or usage of the building served by a septic system.